

## Jim Storey Oral History

JS – Jim Storey    I - Interviewer

JS: I had three breakmen, then they gambled too much, played cards all night.

I: When did you go on the horseshoe freight? What year?

JS: 1917 or 1918. After I went to work for the railroad. I went to work in 1915.

I: What job were you doing before that?

JS: I was in electric passenger service. Tiburon, San Rafael, San Anselmo, Ross, Mill Valley junction to Mill Valley and Sausalito and made the turn around. Mostly freight on the horseshoe freight between 20 and 40 cars.

I: Was engine 109 on the horseshoe freight?

JS: I don't remember the engine, but I know Gene Colet was the engineer then.

I: Clancy used to be on that?

JS: No Clancy died before I went on it.

I: How many years did you stay on there?

JS: Just six months, they started building the highway from Corte Madera over the hill to Sausalito, six, eight, ten cars of rock and gravel. I had to deliver every day. I hauled from Tiburon junction. They were gondolas.

I: Did you ever have any close calls or wrecks?

JS: No. Between San Anselmo and San Rafael there is a hill not too steep. We were going to San Anselmo one afternoon with about 40 cars, half of them were empty. I was walking in flat sand(?) and saw half the train was \_\_(?), so I laid on my stomach and turned the faucet on and let it go on easy and we went down and nothing happened. Only half of the train had air on it, the back part had no air, no braking capacity, the hose was coupled up, the valve shut. It could have been a serious accident, the engineer had to control the whole train and he only had half of it so when I put the air in it jerked him ahead as we were going downhill. That's the only incident I can think of, just remembered it was a lot of hard work. You had to truck out, unload at some small station. We didn't have a sidetrack or a station agent there. We had to do it fast as the electric train came every half hour, so we had to do this in between. Sometimes we had to back up the cars into a junction. You had to keep your eyes open at all times and watch out you didn't step on a line rail. Wasn't an easy job and I was tired at night. In summertime we worked 12, 15 hours every day. We got back to Tiburon. After the train tied up, I came back on the boat – the little Marin, ran between Tiburon, Belvedere and Sausalito. Engineer's name was Sheridan. He retired to his ranch between Monte Rio and Duncans Mills.

About the time when the Duncans Mills train was late. Passenger train left Duncans Mills on July 4<sup>th</sup>, don't remember the year. Lots of people wanted to go to San Francisco. By the time we got to Monte Rio it was so crowded, had 12 cars but people



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were hanging on even the outside like bees. When we got to Santa Rosa no one could get off or on, it was about 7 or 7:30. The superintendent told me to bring it in. I told him I couldn't, too dangerous would kill the people. Send me some coaches, said no coaches they were all out. Finally sent me three coaches. I got in at 12 o'clock at Tiburon and they never said a word why I did that or didn't. No one got hurt, they didn't say a word, didn't thank me or nothing.

I: What was the reason you went on freight train anyway?

JS: I was on passenger electric (he was a porter on the railroad). They fired four conductors and eleven brakemen. Took me off passenger because I let a fellow ride without paying. They reduced me until they got a new superintendent – that was Knapp. He asked me why, told him and I got a letter from him in a couple of days and he said you are free to bid on whatever part of the train you wish. So when passenger train came up, I bid on it and stayed until I retired in 1927. I bought this property in I guess in 1926 but I stayed on the railroad until March of the next year. I had a grocery store, soft drinks, ice cream and campgrounds and my wife did all the work. I worked too but she was the best one. I stayed with that until I retired in 1939.

I: How many tenants have you had since then?

JS: I had five, one was 19 years old.

I: How many years have you been retired?

JS: Thirty-four years and am now 92 years old.

I: When you were on the Ukiah freight any unusual experiences?

JS: No, we did a run from Petaluma, leave at 5am to Ukiah next day left Ukiah at 9am to San Anselmo at 5pm. Freight man was Haley, a good man to work with, he made train master eventually. Before that we used to break together. About the time on a run from Petaluma to Tiburon, I was giving signals on top of the boxcar not watching except my signals and I stepped off the top of the car, knocked the wind out of me. I fell on my side, no bones broken. Brakeman came by, shoved me in the stomach and said "Get up, come on we got work to do". So, I went into the caboose. Laid up for two or three days, no pay for the days off. I never got paid for a day I didn't work.